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12-17-96

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Dear Hal:

I'm taking advantage of a two week holiday from work (beginning today) to write you and tell you more about the JFK Lancer conference held in Dallas this past November. One of the highlights, of course, was attending the Mary Ferrell Awards night when you and your wife received an award plus your video commentary on accepting the award. I believe that now that you've received both an award from COPA and now Lancer you may well be the only such person to have accomplished this.

Of course there was a good deal that occurred at the Lancer conference that should be forgotten but I'll try here in this letter to dwell on the positive aspects I picked up. You may have heard through the grapevine that I sort of caused a bit of a "stir" when I challenged 2 speakers on the alleged alteration of the Z-film. I'll get into this more as the letter continues. But it was clearly my feeling that the defenders of Z-film alteration are looking sillier & sillier as time goes on.

As you may or may not know the recent Lancer conference proved to be a vehicle for pushing (or promoting)

Dave Lifton & his "body alteration" theory. I saw no one in any of the panels (or audience) rejecting his notions & I must say that since I was part of that audience I raised no objections. In my case I felt it would do no good as I thought there were greater areas to go after. Dave will always hold to his theory & will never admit error — I leave it at that. But in the case of others with their "off the wall" theories I feel I can put in my two cents worth.

Dave wouldn't discuss his new book other than to say that if he did he'd be in trouble with his publisher. I believe his book is called "The Three Faces of Lee Harvey Oswald."

Lifton continued his defense of his body alteration theory. I sensed from the audience reaction that they were politely listening but not all bought into it. But I have no doubt many did buy into it. (I wonked to myself though why, if the body was altered, would one want to consider Z-film alteration in addition?).

I know you'll find this amusing but at one point Lifton stated of himself: "Think of me as Columbo without the raincoat."

One very interesting sidebar to Lifton's comments was a video tape he showed of a fellow named Leonard Faswell. Apparently a week after the JFK murder, this Faswell who obtained a PHD in biochemistry) was sitting in a cafeteria one table away from Dr. Finck. Finck was with 2 other officers and was loudly complaining that "his notes are gone". The incident took place at Walter Reed Hospital. Lifton said Faswell had once worked at the AFIP which I took to mean the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology. From what I can recall this cafeteria room

was tied in with the Walter Reed AFIP program there but I'm uncertain as to this.

What Lifton maintained was that Finck was quite mad & loud about these "lost notes" Lifton said that Finck even got what staff he had working at Bethesda to look for these "lost notes" but to no avail. They found nothing. According to Lifton Finck had to "reconstruct" the details of the autopsy in the form of "new" notes. This Finck accomplished in "several hours"!

If all this is true there's no mention of Finck doing this that I can recall appearing either at the Warren Commission or the HSCA. And who would that assisting staff be Lifton refers to. All very odd but the Cancer conference will have a video soon to verify that Lifton did say what he did. And I'm confident my notes reflect accurately what he stated. Have you ever heard of this Leonard Faswell?

Now to get to my "encounter" with a panel discussing the Z-film. Virtually all panelists took the position of alteration. There was no one on the panels who took a position that the Z-film wasn't altered or even close to the position that it was impossible to alter the film. I understand that at the rival COPA conference taking place in Dallas (at the same time as Cancer's) Robert Groden got into a bitter argument with James Fetzer (who argued for alteration). Groden took the position the Z-film wasn't altered. So at two different meetings the Z-film was upheld as being of a fraudulent nature and except for myself & Groden little opposition to those defending the Z-film alteration line. And Fetzer was one of the panelists I voiced objections to when I

told him I didn't believe in Z-film alteration. Fetzer then labelled me as being "irrational" & said something like: "Come on, Mr. Vigilante - get with it, Z-film alteration is a fact & it's time you knew it." There was a buzz that permeated throughout the audience as if I was stepping on too many toes & they wanted me to know it. It may sound paranoic on my part to have felt this but I definitely felt it!

Actually I mainly opposed Dr. David Mantik who was trying to "prove" alteration by pointing to alleged objects in Z-frames being "magnified". His claim was this was being done to hide the fact of alteration. He even tried to show that the fatal head shot didn't occurred at Z-313 but was later (Z-316) & the frame ~~was~~ ergo was moved backward to be fixated at Z-313 instead. It was all very bad science & when I raised my hand to protest this I cited three errors in his presentation which I listed as (a) Perspective, (b) Acoustics, and (3) First Shot Analysis.

~~Then~~ Twice Mantik repeated that the first shot occurred in the Z-200+ above levels. Mantik had to publicly state he was in error on this & I cited both your work (& even my work) on this showing a first shot being at about Z-189. I then said he had totally ignored acoustics readings & he said - Yes, that's true - he forgot to mention this. Mantik was just out of his element when it comes to photographic analysis & the problem was that of all the panelists none were fit to discuss it from a photo-analyst point of view let alone from their own clearwise unaware interpretations of the evidence. Again as I've often stated - they simply haven't done their homework.

Now to get to Gerry Patrick Hemming who was a speaker for Cancer. This is the first time I'd ever seen him (& had him autograph a photo of him in military fatigues, which I believe was taken at No Name Key).

Here are some of the more memorable quotes that I've gleaned from my notebook & I know you'll find some of them interesting, if not amusing:

Hemming = "We had it made with John Kennedy --- but he stepped on toes"

" = "Garrison helped prove that Marcello didn't kill JFK."

" = (On why Oswald was sent to the Soviet Union) = "Oswald was the 'fall guy' for the U-2 failure"
(I don't believe this for a moment - this sounds more like one of Hemming's wild speculations).

" = Hemming denied that he had called James Angleton to discuss Oswald (this denial come in response to a question by John Newman.
(Here I believe Hemming & it is possible that Newman may have even believed that Hemming had discussed Oswald with Angleton. This sounds very much like Newman's thinking on the matter).

" = In a question to Hemming as to "When was the last time you saw Oswald?" Hemming replied = "With or Without Elvis!?!"
(This sounds like the "true" Hemming scoffing at intimations he met & knew Oswald).

Now as a final note, in your last letter to me you asked me about the matter of Col. Robert E. Jones.

I'll refresh your memory on this. You asked = "What you say about Jones saying he had 8 men assigned to Dallas who would say they were from the SS is interesting. Do you have any kind of record on that?"

Yes, I do have a record & am enclosing what I have with this letter. It is all from the HSCA Report. ~~& some of the Volumes~~ The "Report" pages cited are = 184, 221, 222, 223 & 224. ~~for the page #'s~~

~~The HSCA volumes are~~ From page 184, & pages 221 to 224 there are footnote references to various "Executive Session Testimony of Robert E. Jones which occured in April & June, 1978. These refer to three "JFK Classified Documents" which are numbered as follows #014648, #009383 & #014677). I do not have these documents nor do I know if they have ever been declassified.

Other footnotes relating to Jones point to a meeting of Jones in a R. Anson book (which must be "THEY LIVE KILLED THE PRESIDENT"; a Paul Hoch document (dated 10/8/77) & referred to as "JFK Document 002538), & finally a Dept of Defense "Letter & Attachment" to the HSCA dated 7/26/78 which refers to = "JFK Document # 010247 of "JFK CLASSIFIED Document # 060103".

My notes show nothing more on Jones. I will be writing to the ARRB soon to see what they've found. I'll also be writing the ARRB on James Powell to see what more they've learned from him.

I don't know if you know about it but Marina Oswald was on the Oprah Winfrey TV show on Nov 22, 1996. Apparently from what friends tell me Oprah gave Marina a full hour. Oprah herself said that ever since the

assassination occurred (at age 9) she has always believed there was a conspiracy. I understand that Marina again said Lee was innocent + that Marina criticized the ARRB for its snail-paced work. One researcher wrote me & said Tenkeim (of the ARRB) came out "looking real weak" in the program. Tenkeim was given a chance to speak but so were Mary La Fontaine & James Hosty. I don't know what La Fontaine said nor what Hosty said but it is my understanding that Marina has put full credence in the La Fontaine-Elwood-Oswald story & stands by it completely. If this is the case Marina must now also believe that Oswald was working very closely with Hosty as an informant. I just can't believe she's gone ahead & done this but if so it is all rather embarrassing. Is there anything one can do to get her on the right track again? I think all this very unfortunate but there must be something that can be done about it all, don't you think?

As far as the other enclosures I thought you'd find it interesting the excerpts from the book, "Kennedy and his Women" — the section dealing with Joan Hitchcock. The copy of the letter from E. Brandt which attacks me for believing in conspiracy. You may recall that Brandt is the waitress I discovered in 1993 in Dallas. You can see Brandt in Z-202 & in Willis #5. He's the one wearing a hat & his friend (John Templin) is also in both films. You'll note that Brandt doesn't realize the implications of his own observations = that there was a shot prior to 202, that at struck JFK which the Warren Commission says didn't occur that way.

Brandt is now a "docent" who now leads 6th floor tourists on guide tours to show how the Warren Commission was all right after all. I doubt that any visitors there would ever challenge him on his own observations & show how totally in error he is as to the Conclusions.

Brandt's letter is the second he's sent me & I've yet to respond to him. I think you're probably right when you say that it wouldn't do any good to reply. He knows the truth & that's it!

The article on the Stock Market reaction to the JFK assassination is written by I. Marshall. Marshall once collaborated with Peter Dale Scott on "Cocaine Politics". Marshall once worked at the Oakland Tribune (my good friend, Tom Sanders, knew him quite well). Marshall now is with the S.F. Chronicle & I believe is the economics editor or staff writer & I met him once.

I guess I'll close now & I do hope everything is fine with you & your wife. I hope it will be an easy winter for you. So far here it has been somewhat mild & I wait for the days when Spring will finally arrive.

Best,

Hal Verb